

*President of the Royal College of  
(2) Surgeons - London  
From the Author*

ARMY

# MEDICAL REFORM.

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LETTER

FROM A

MEDICAL OFFICER OF THE INDIAN  
ARMY.



INVERNESS:  
PRINTED AT THE COURIER OFFICE.

1855.

PRINTED AT THE COURIER OFFICE, INVERNESS.

TO J. R. MARTIN, ESQ., F.R.C.S.,

LATE OF THE BENGAL MEDICAL STAFF.

MY DEAR SIR,

The following letter was written in India, in the latter part of the year 1854, when, under the pressure of sickness, the result of nearly seventeen years of uninterrupted public service, I was about to embark for Europe. It has since been submitted to the perusal of the highest authority in India, who directed a copy to be kept for reference in his office, in case it should be in his Lordship's power to take up this neglected question of Army Medical Reform, even at the eleventh hour.

On my arrival in London, I was fortunate enough to make your acquaintance. It was natural that I should seek to know personally one who has distinguished himself, not only as a medical officer of the Indian army, but also by the manly and disinterested manner in which, almost single-handed, he fought the battle of his absent brethren. As you are of opinion that some good may result from printing this letter, I now do so; and trust that all who may be induced to peruse it will turn, in corroboration of my statements, to your admirable evidence on the question given before a Committee of the House of Commons.

It is well known that Lord Dalhousie, impressed with the defective organization of the Medical Departments in the three Presidencies, contemplated a searching remedy. It is much to be feared, however, that this distinguished Statesman and great Administrator, will eventually leave India without having carried out his intention. During the whole of his Lordship's Administration, nothing was more remarkable than the zeal with which merit in every department of the public service was sought out and rewarded, without respect to other considerations. Following the footsteps of the Earl of Ellen-

borough, who, in this by no means unimportant part of Government, set a bright example of "Administrative Reform," before that phrase became a popular cry.

The prizes in the Medical Department are few and far between; but during Lord Dalhousie's Government, such of them as were at his Lordship's disposal were, without exception, bestowed on the most distinguished men; and I speak of what I know, when I say that a healthful stimulus was thereby diffused throughout the department, of which it stood greatly in need.

When the following pages were written, the Author, in common with all in India, was ignorant of the fearful scenes then passing in the Crimea. Every reflecting man must now see that those disasters, so keenly felt by the nation, were the natural consequences of the neglect into which the Army Medical Department had fallen, and of the miserable system on which its affairs had been conducted.

Justice has not yet, and probably never will be done, to the noble exertions of the great bulk of the executive medical officers of the army in the Crimea. They will be left, as of old, to seek for their reward in the approbation of their own consciences, which, God be praised, men in office can neither give nor take away.

Let us hope that the noble Lord who is about to succeed Lord Dalhousie will take up this question in an enlightened and liberal spirit. Army Medical Reform has now assumed the magnitude and importance of a great public question, deeply concerning, not merely the interests of a class, but the well-being of an army and the honour of a nation.

I remain,

MY DEAR SIR,

With sentiments of cordial respect and regard,

Most sincerely yours,

THE AUTHOR.

*September 4, 1855.*

LETTER  
FROM  
A MEDICAL OFFICER OF THE INDIAN ARMY  
TO A  
MILITARY FRIEND,  
On Army Medical Reform.

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MY DEAR —

Before entering on the important matter which is to form the subject of this letter, I wish to guard myself against the supposition that in my remarks I seek to disparage any particular individuals. I beg of you to believe me when I say, that I desire as much as possible to avoid even the appearance of anything of the kind. My criticisms shall be directed, not against individuals, but the system on which the department is organised and conducted.

I need not take up your time in arguing on the necessity of a medical department as an essential element in the constitution of every army that professes to be something better than an armed mob. The necessity granted, it follows, as a matter of course, that the department should be so officered, trained, and organized, as best to secure the end in view, viz., the health and physical efficiency of the army in quarters and the field.

*Ceteris Paribus*, the army best provided with military hospitals, properly organized and administered, enjoys such an advantage over one defective in this particular as must exercise a powerful influence on the result of military operations.

The writings of Baron Moltke, Colonel Chesney, and others, have demonstrated that the most decisive achievements of the Russian army have been effected, for want of an efficient medical department, at a cost of human life and suffering without a parallel in the history of modern war.

The British army, at the commencement of the French Revolutionary wars, was not much better off in this respect than that of Russia is now, as we learn from General Bunbury's detailed account of our miserable failures under the Duke of York in Holland. In-



deed, it was not until taught by the costly and bloody campaigns of Wellington in Spain, that anything worthy of the name of organization was introduced into the department. At the battle of Toulouse, which concluded that war, so glorious to the British arms, the wounded, amounting to 1359, including 117 officers, were in charge of two Deputy-Inspectors-General, ten Staff-Surgeons, fifty-one Assistant-Surgeons, besides subordinates, and exclusive of regimental medical officers present with their regiments: "And the whole," says Mr Guthrie, "worked from morning to night with the greatest assiduity. The surgery of the British army was at the highest point it attained during the war; and this enumeration is given to show the number of medical men required, under the most favourable circumstances, for 1500 men, if they are to have all the aid surgery can give them."

With the organization of the medical service, such as it is, you are sufficiently acquainted. The service, in all the Presidencies, is divided into Surgeons and Assistant-Surgeons. The latter performing precisely the same duties as their superiors. In the Madras Presidency, twenty-four may be taken as the average age at which men enter the service; and, at the present pace of promotion, sixteen years and a-half may be taken as the average period of service in that grade; so that few are promoted until upwards of forty years of age. The majority of our Superintending Surgeons have served thirty years. Fifty-four may be taken as their average age. The senior member of the Board has served upwards of thirty-four years, his colleagues within a few months of the same time, so that their present ages may be taken at about fifty-eight. But at the present rate of progress, the Senior Assistant-Surgeon on the list could not expect to reach the Board until he is sixty-three years of age; and supposing him to remain the full period, viz., five years, he would leave that office at the age of sixty-eight—just two years less than the full period allotted to man here below. The service is presided over by the three senior men on the list, who constitute the Medical Board, and who succeed to that office, if not as a matter of right, certainly as a matter of course, by virtue of their seniority.

We have also, as we have seen, a grade of Superintending Surgeons, one to each division of the army, who also, in practice at least, are appointed to this office in virtue of their standing on the list. Some examples of selection, I am aware, can be quoted; but the above is the rule. It must be observed that when a man is promoted to this grade, he causes no vacancy in the list of surgeons; nor, in fact, does this happen until he quits the service.

Let us now turn to the working of this system. If we had no experience of it, if we had no practical knowledge of its working, we could yet have little difficulty in pronouncing an opinion that a service so constituted, and so administered, could not be in a sound state. It is impossible—unless we could make sure that the qualification test required on admission to the service was of the most stringent kind, and strictly applied, so as to exclude incompetent men, in

the most rigorous way—to expect that a Board so constituted could retain the respect of the Government, of the military authorities, or of its own service. It is useless to waste words in proving what is notorious—the sober fact is, the Board has long ceased to exercise any authority. When consulted by Government, it is merely for form's sake; and whatever may be the theory of the thing, as respects military medical officers, all power has passed into the hands of the Adjutant-General of the army, who is virtually the head of the department.

Practically, the Government is thus left without aid and counsel in all matters relating to sanitary measures. Vast have been the evil results, and beyond measure disastrous. Who can sum up the waste of life and treasure, the plain consequence of the gross ignorance so constantly displayed by our Indian Governments in questions of this nature? Cantonments have been selected in open defiance of the best ascertained facts bearing on health. Barracks have been built, and costly repairs wasted on others that for half-a-century have been mere pest-houses. Our cantonments, for the most part, are to this day in a most disgraceful condition, well-known causes of disease rife and abounding on every hand, and all for want of some person, or body of persons, who can speak out on such subjects so as to compel a respectful attention.

Look, again, at our Madras system of regimental reliefs. It is a disgrace to our age and civilization. This necessary measure is effected yearly at a cost of human life and suffering at which we should stand aghast, or rather leave nothing untried until some measure was hit upon to abate so frightful a waste of life. It has been established, mainly by the researches of Dr Lorimer, that cholera afflicts our regiments on the line of march pretty much in proportion to the length of the journey. It has been shown that, for the most part, when a march exceeds two hundred miles, cholera is sure to appear, and to afflict the wearied soldiers and their wretched families with a severity that bears a direct ratio to the distance over which they have travelled. Yet six hundred, eight hundred, even a thousand miles are common. The returns convey no idea of the loss of life incurred; it is only the fighting men that appear in them; no note is made of the miserable followers, who perish by hundreds, their bodies pollute the air along all our great lines of communication; yet custom has so—I will not say hardened the hearts of our military authorities to this crying evil, but has impressed their minds with the idea that it is one for which there is no remedy. I do not for an instant assert that the great loss of life incurred on the Madras side of India, on the line of march, is to be attributed *solely* to the length of our marches. Far from it; there are other causes, and very obvious ones too, at work to account for it; but this I say, that if this army had a real, and not a nominal head to its Medical Department, this question would have been sifted to the bottom, and nothing left undone until a remedy was found.



If I am told that, although the Medical Board does not hold the position it should do in the estimation of Government, it can yet speak with authority to its own members; that, in a word, it still suffices as a controlling authority for the department—I answer that no Board can do this effectually unless it is so constituted as to command the respect of its juniors. Now, the very reasons that have tended to lower the Board in the estimation of the Government and the military authorities, have operated effectually to diminish its prestige with the service. Now and then, of course, a man of ability makes his way into the Board; but it is difficult for any single man to make head against those influences which have so long been in operation to lower the name and authority of the Board of which he is a member. I have conversed long and anxiously with some of the ablest executive medical officers in the service, and I find that the all but universal opinion is, that, constituted as the Board now is, their criticisms on the practice of the department do not conduce to the good of the service, and are not such as to command the assent and respect of the ablest officers, still less to correct the careless, and stimulate the zeal of those who do not strive to keep their knowledge up to the level of the science of the day.

I have seen many curious examples of <sup>these</sup> ~~these~~ observations. One came very recently under my notice. A surgeon of many years standing and great experience, with a very responsible charge, during a late epidemic expended in one month four bottles of port-wine in one of his hospitals. The Board demanded an explanation of “this excessive expenditure!” The surgeon explained that an intermittent fever had been epidemic in the lines, that his men had suffered severely, and that the patients to whom the port-wine had been administered had been much debilitated and broken, and pointed to the happy effects that had resulted in the entire recovery of the sick. The Board, in reply, called upon this gentleman, a surgeon of nearly twenty-five years service, to copy out, *in extenso*, the cases of all the men to whom wine had been exhibited—just as an Eton usher would direct a lazy schoolboy to commit so many hundred lines of Virgil to memory. The object of solicitude here, it will be observed, was not the patients, but the wine. And so it is throughout—the Board on the one hand, and the Superintending Surgeons on the other, seem actuated by a morbid dread of “excessive expenditure.” They cut and pare down until the interests of the sick are lost sight of. I cannot speak with any authority as to the state of the case in Bengal and Bombay; but on the Madras side of India, the fact is notorious that our military hospitals are not supplied in such a way as to give the sick all the benefits they have a right to expect from the present state of medical and surgical knowledge. The supply of that invaluable drug, the sulphate of quinine, to our native regiments more especially, is scandalously inadequate. The nervousness of our Superintending-Surgeons, on this head, is perfectly ludicrous. I have on the table before me



some amusing examples of their excessive care of the public finances. One gentleman forbids the officers under him "to prescribe more than three grains at a time to any patient," and this when a severe remittent fever was raging in the station. It is useless to add that, in such doses, the quinine might as well have been cast into the sea. Seriously, this limited supply of quinine demands the attention of Government. That it is an expensive drug, I am well aware; but so effective is it when judiciously used, not only in curing fever, but also in preventing and even removing many of the evil consequences resulting from them, that I am confident, and the opinion is shared in by many of our most judicious officers, that a large saving in the pension-list might be effected by the additional expenditure of a thousand pounds or so on this drug. But it is not in this only that our hospitals are deficient. There is not such a thing in any native regimental hospital under this Presidency as a proper fracture-splint. Of the many simple, cheap, and admirable mechanical contrivances of this sort, not one is to be found within the reach of our surgeons. Indeed, I am certain that few even of our depots are supplied with them.

I may take as another example of the defects of our present no-system—the state of our Medical Depots.

If there is any part of the Madras army likely to be called on suddenly to act offensively, it is the Hyderabad subsidiary force. This is in effect a field force. It is in the close vicinity of the city of Hyderabad, where there are never less than from five to six thousand Arabs. "We," said an Arab Chieftain to Major Malcolm, the Assistant-Resident, "have always endeavoured to avoid coming into hostile contact with the British; but the time no doubt will come when it will be your object to turn us out of Hyderabad. Well, you will probably do so: great is your power, and great is the luck of your Government—but on that day the streets of Hyderabad will run red with blood!" If we pay a visit to the Arsenal, we find everything prepared against the day of need: the ammunition for every gun is prepared and ready to be placed in the tumbrils. Nothing is left to chance, or the mercy of a moment. What, let me inquire, are the surgical preparations for a struggle that the merest accident may precipitate any day in the course of the following week? They just amount to nothing at all. Four or five hundred casualties may reasonably be expected as the probable, certainly the possible result of such a conflict, with desperadoes who never ask, or expect, or give quarter—whose custom it is to die resisting to the last. Let this conflict come, and even supposing the most perfect success to crown our arms, I predict a scene of confusion in the hospitals most painful to think of; and, in the event of such a turn in our affairs as to render our position within the walls for a time untenable, disastrous results to our wounded officers and men that would deepen the disgrace of a repulse a thousand-fold. This is no imaginary difficulty. Some years ago, General Fraser, the then Resident, suddenly took possession of a

quarter of the city to overawe, *not* the Arabs, but the "Line-Wallahs." No conflict ensued; but every one knew that the least want of discretion on the part of officer or man might have brought the British troops and Arabs into conflict. Now, on that occasion, although nothing was more probable than such a result, there absolutely were no medical arrangements at all. I have no doubt that every regimental medical officer entered the city with a resolute determination to do the best he could for his wounded; but there were no general preparations, such as should be made on the eve of a great battle. No Staff-Surgeon was appointed, no field-hospital was organised, no preparations at all were made. I ask any one familiar with war, with the wants and requirements of even two or three hundred wounded men, to picture to himself what must have followed from such arrangements, or rather no arrangements.

Again, it is often made a reproach to the medical officers of the Indian army, that they have not contributed a fair quota to the general stock of knowledge and experience. I do not think the reproach well-founded. The fault, at all events, lies at the door, not of individual medical officers, but with the medical authorities. The shelves of our Board office groan under a load of information of the deepest interest, which is turned to no practical account at all. Even were it otherwise, many of our returns on this side of India are so faulty, so far below the level of the science and the more rigid statistical requirements of the age, as to be almost worthless.

If we turn to the Superintending Surgeons, we find that nearly the same observations are applicable to them as to the Board. They exist and exercise their functions in virtue of their seniority. Of course, it more frequently happens that we have an able Superintending Surgeon of a division or force, than three able men in the Board. But whatever may be the theory of the matter, in practice a Superintending Surgeon is merely a channel of correspondence, and an officer whose chief duty it is to keep down expenditure, to check indents, and assist the Commissariat Department in making our hospitals as ineffective as possible. They take tithes of mint and cummin, but neglect weightier matters. I am no advocate for vexatious meddling with the practice of executive medical officers; indeed, the interference of a crotchety superintending officer would be a nuisance past all endurance, and would not conduce to the good of the service. Still, the want of a real, judicious supervision is one of the crying wants of the service—to encourage and support the hands of the diligent and painstaking, and bring him to the notice of authority; to rebuke the careless and stir up the slothful. In the present state of our affairs, as a general rule, they fare pretty much alike—the most indolent man, one who knows nothing, and cares less, about what has been done in his profession since he left the schools, is not worse off than the man who labours hard to keep up his knowledge to the



requirements of the day. A man—it is no imaginary case—may have so sunk in the estimation of his brother officers, that not one of them in the regiment will consult him, or seek his aid for his family; may be so grossly ignorant as to salivate a child nine years of age for a fever that would have yielded, and that did at last yield, to a grain or two of quinine; or to give calomel and laudanum to a teething infant, who had not a symptom demanding such treatment, without inquiry and without rebuke; and so long as he goes through the routine of his daily duty, and commits no offence “contrary to good order and military discipline,” may retain a charge more lucrative and more important than his neighbour, who would in any place be esteemed an ornament to his profession. If our Superintending Surgeons were in reality what their designation indicates, such things could not be. It is plainly the duty of the superintending authority, when such a case comes to his knowledge, to investigate all the circumstances, however disagreeable the duty may be. It may be in his power to show the discontented officers that their objections to their medical man are unfounded, and to restore peace and confidence; or, on the other hand, gross incompetency and carelessness would thus be brought to light, and justice done to all parties. As the matter stands, our executive medical officers on military duty look to the Adjutant-General of the army, and “make interest” in that quarter for their advancement. Now, the Adjutant-General cannot be, and, I presume, does not affect to be, any judge of the professional merits of the medical officers whose position he determines. I make no doubt that, when left to himself, he does the best he can for the service. He knows something of the general character and conduct of every medical officer in the army; the confidential reports of commanding officers give him information of this sort, which he will value according to the confidence he happens to repose in the veracity, judgment, and capacity of the reporting officer. But it is obvious that a medical man may be, as regards all military points, blameless, and yet be in every point of view inferior to another who is yet compelled to give place. And thus it happens, that where the right man is to be found in the right place, we have to thank accident, or “interest” for once and away honestly directed.

In the foregoing remarks, I have not scrupled to expose our sore places and the defects of our system. My task would be but half completed if I did not touch on other matters relating to the condition of the service, without a thorough change in which it can never be in a sound state.

There, perhaps, is no body of men in the service of the Government of India, as a class, so thoroughly discontented as the medical officers of the Indian army. I make this assertion advisedly, and will go so far as to say that it is universal and profound. The causes are not difficult to find. There exists, and always has existed, a feeling in the minds of military men in authority hostile to the Medical Department as a body. Whenever it is possible to



place a medical officer in a disadvantageous position, it is done. Whenever it is possible to make a distinction between a military and a medical officer to the disadvantage of the latter, it is done.

Every one who knows anything of war, knows that medical officers share in all the fatigues, privations, and many of the actual dangers to which military officers are exposed, and many more which are peculiar to their own duties; and yet when the honours of war are distributed, how rarely are the services of military surgeons rewarded. In fact, army medical officers are in a most anomalous position—they are military men, and they are not. Whenever it is to their disadvantage to be considered so, they are forced to be soldiers; when otherwise, the notion is practically scouted. They have, in fact, no military rank at all.

If a surgeon of twenty-five years' service, who has grown grey in the service of his country, has to serve on a committee with military officers, the beardless ensign of yesterday takes precedence of him. Time would fail me were I to enumerate half of the humiliations to which military surgeons are hourly subjected. Nominally, they are on a footing of equality as regards rank, pay, and privileges of leave; practically the most decided distinctions in all these are made. One example is worth fifty vague assertions. The writer's brother happens to be a field officer in the Bombay army, and, at the period of which he is about to speak, held a civil appointment in Scinde. His health and the author's happened to break down much about the same time. The military officer went on sick certificate to the Cape for two years, retaining his appointment and half of his allowance as a matter of right. The other went to the Ncelgherries, losing the whole of his staff-pay from the hour of his departure until that of his return. At the end of six months' absence, his appointment, by a rule only applicable to medical officers, was declared vacant, and he owed its restoration, not to any feeling of right, but to the kindness of a distinguished military friend in high office, who was wounded near him in action, and to whom it was his good fortune to render assistance. On being re-gazetted to his appointment, although already deprived of all his staff-pay, the author instantly fell into the hands of the military Auditor-General, and was subjected to a still further reduction of his *military* pay, on the score of his "not having joined." When a respectful remonstrance against this additional deduction was forwarded through the proper channel, a sharp rebuke was all that followed. The rule under which the writer suffered remains in full force to this day, at least on the Madras side of India.\* Take another example of this animus. When the new furlough regulations were promulgated, a medical officer, about to proceed to England on sick certificate, applied to take advantage of them. He was instantly told that medical officers were not included in

\* Since this was written, the order in question has been cancelled by the Governor-General in Council.

the supposed indulgence, and a circular to that effect was addressed to all Superintending Surgeons.\*

I might swell out this letter by many other examples of the same sort, all illustrating the same narrow and ungracious spirit. But the subject is painful and most distasteful. Suffice it to say, that, by every man of proper spirit, by every one who has an atom of self-respect, or regard for the honour of his service and profession, these things are keenly felt. If there be a man in the service who does not feel them, Government may rest assured that they could well dispense with his services.

The medical officers of the Indian army spring from the same class as their brethren, viz., the upper ranks of the middle classes; they are the brothers, sons, and relatives of the more favoured rank; they are gentlemen by birth and education. They have rendered, and are daily rendering great service to the State. They spend, and are spent daily in their country's cause, and have never been backward to shed their blood and lay down their lives in the execution of their duty. Such treatment is not only unjust, but it is impolitic in the highest degree. If men in authority would only reflect for a little, they would see how much such a system tends to keep men of ability and high attainments out of the service. If it is argued that, as a body, we have not much to complain of as regards emolument, and should therewith be content; I answer, that "man does not live by bread alone." I would say to our rulers, "If you teach us to look for the reward of our services in money and nothing else, you have done your best to degrade us, and to destroy our efficiency." That in the face of all these discouragements we have maintained our courage, and for the most part done our duty, under a high sense of personal honour, "as unto God, and not unto man," I say it redounds greatly to the credit of our service. If you wish to see the consequences of this system of degradation carried out to the fullest extent, I ask you to look to the present condition of the medical officers of the Royal Navy. The Admiralty have persisted in their old system of injustice towards the medical officers of the navy, even in the face of a strong resolution of the House of Commons. They saw that young men of superior attainments, who would gladly have served in Her Majesty's Navy if treated as officers and gentlemen, left it as soon as they found out that the very reverse was their fate. The various colleges and great medical corporations long since addressed them, pointing out the growing aversion of properly qualified medical men to serve in the navy, and that unless the present system were revised the supply would be cut off entirely. And so it has happened. The Admiralty persisted in their determination not to treat naval surgeons as they ought to be treated, and they

\* I am informed by Mr Martin, late of the Bengal Medical Service, that the very same thing happened in Bengal, when the new regulations on the subject of retirement were promulgated.



have been driven to set up an examining board of their own, and to lower the standard of qualification. And so it has come about, that when England has sent out the noblest fleets she ever equipped to maintain the honour of her flag on every sea, her officers and seamen, so far from meeting with the skill they have a right to expect when maimed in battle, will, in this respect, in this year 1854, be worse off than their fathers who fought and bled at Trafalgar.

I would earnestly and respectfully ask our rulers to think on these things. We hear a great deal of the flood of talent to be let in upon us under the new rules for the admission of Assistant-Surgeons. With all my heart I desire that the most entire success may attend the measure. Of this, however, I am sure, men of this stamp will not be content to serve under the present system. One of two things will happen—a large portion of them will leave us in disgust, or they will make known in the great schools from whence they came, the false promises under which they entered the service and gave up a home career; and thus the supply of such men will be cut off at the source, and the authorities will, like the Admiralty, have to make their choice between a redress of grievances, or to lower the standard of qualification to that dead level of incompetency now obtaining in Her Majesty's navy.

*remedies* The ~~remedy~~ for our wants and abuses are few and simple. I would abolish the Board at all the Presidencies as a worn-out and effete machine. Government do not require to be told that consideration must be shown to their old servants. Although all are not fit to preside over a department, good and faithful service should not go unrewarded. In place of the Board I would appoint a single responsible medical officer to the head of the department, with ample and well-defined authority.\*

He should have two efficient secretaries—one to carry on the correspondence of the office, the other to be a medical registrar, to superintend the returns and to prepare annual reports exhibiting the actual state of the army in all its branches as regards health and disease.

\* If it be said that recent events have shown that the plan here suggested, of a Director-General, has failed at home, I answer that the experiment has never in reality been tried at all. The Director-General of the Army Medical Department was so merely in name. He was miserably paid—his emoluments being less than those of a man in second-rate business in a country town. He had, at least, four masters, had little influence, and no authority. The experiment here suggested has never, in our mind, been tried at all. And it is to be feared that Government contemplates having recourse, in this country, to the old contrivance of a Board, at the very time when in India experience has demonstrated the worthlessness of such a machine in every department of the public service.

There is one part of our Indian system which I would very earnestly commend to the notice of the noble Lord now at the head of the War Department—and that is our Subordinate Medical Department, a class of non-commissioned but carefully trained men, whose duty it is to act in the hospitals under the orders of the medical officers. It is not too much to say that, if the overworked Medical Staff of the army in the Crimea had been so supported, many of the miserable disasters which so profoundly agitated the public mind would never have occurred at all.



I am not prepared to advise that the office of Superintending Surgeon should be abolished, but measures should be taken to make the principle of selection real and effective, not, as now, nominal. In justice to the service, when a man is promoted to this grade, an Assistant-Surgeon should be promoted to the rank of Surgeon. I would strongly urge the establishment of a new grade of Staff-Surgeon, to act under the Superintending Surgeons of each division. For officers of this rank there is abundance of work, and, if due care be exercised in the selection of individuals, I am sure great good would result. It would be their duty to visit the different stations within their range, to exercise a judicious supervision over the hospitals, to report on the sanitary condition of the different stations, and in the event of any sickness appearing in the lines of any regiment within their circle, it would be their duty to proceed at once, and to investigate its causes on the spot, calling to their assistance such medical officers at the station as they may deem best qualified for the duty. Should more than one regiment take the field, it would be their duty to accompany the force, and to superintend the medical arrangements. I would abolish at once and for ever all the vexatious distinctions now made between military and medical officers, putting them on an equality as regards pay and allowances, leave privileges, and so on. The pretence on which real rank is withheld from medical officers is on the score of military command. To this medical officers make no pretension, and it would be very easy so to word their commission as to make any mistake on this head impossible; while, at the same time, a real military position is given, to prevent those vexatious and degrading humiliations to which military surgeons are hourly exposed. And I would strongly advise that a fair share of military honours should be given to those who have distinguished themselves on service.

Believe me,

MY DEAR —,

Yours most truly,

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